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FOREWORD

This work addresses, systematically and in detail, a question that until this day has remained essentially unanswered. How, exactly how, did the truncated, marginalized U.S. Army of the interwar period produce so many capable division and corps commanders by the time of the D-Day campaign of 1944-1945?

It has been said, accurately, that he who has not fought the Germans does not know war. Discussions of the army's performance during its graduation exercises tend to concentrate at the top and the bottom. At policy and strategy levels, the focus is on Anglo-American friction and the competence of Dwight Eisenhower and his army commanders. At the sharp end, the issue of American "fighting power" vis-à-vis the German adversary inspires discussion of everything from tank design to infantry replacement policies.

Without competence in the middle parts of command, however, superior generalship and battlefield virtuosity alike are likely to be wasted. Given the nature of modern war and the scale of the fighting in Northwest Europe, effectiveness at division and corps levels was crucial to performance in all of the contending armies. Here, if anywhere, the Germans might have been expected to enjoy an advantage. To a history of large armies and a widely praised system of military education, they added five years of ruthless combat: surely time enough for cream to rise to the top. Even the British army, hardly a touchstone for military preparedness during the interwar years, had possessed a structure of higher commands and a spectrum of missions that allowed senior commanders to test their ideas and try their wings.

The United States Army did not neglect what it called "the art of command." Its Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth was designed to train middle-grade officers for assignment at division and corps levels. Its curriculum and ethos, however, encouraged the development of staff officers rather than commanders: problem solvers rather than battle captains. The Army War College, created in 1903, emphasized preparing its students for high command but focused largely on theory drawn from history, especially American experience in the Civil War and in World War I. Post-1918 technological developments, and their accompanying pressure for devolved authority and individual initiative, were largely neglected.

The army, moreover, had for all practical purposes no operational command structure above the regiment. Divisions and corps were paper formations. Most of the regiments, grossly undermanned and geographically dispersed, were more notional than functional. Even the major overseas garrisons, Hawaii and the Philippines, were essentially administrative entities. The exponential expansion of the army that began in 1940, and the accompanying purge of senior National Guard officers who at least had some practice handling a division, produced a network of two-star generals who essentially learned their craft on the job.

This was an unpromising matrix for final victory. Even if its best days were past by the summer of 1944, Hitler's Wehrmacht was a formidable enemy that charged a bloody tuition for its lessons. But the men who led Eisenhower's divisions and corps across Europe performed well—so well that they are seldom included in the list of America's military shortcomings compared to the Germans, the Soviets, and even the British. There were around a hundred of them. The photos that appear scattered throughout the volumes of the official history or concentrated in the illustrations of the books in the military history sections of contemporary bookstores look strangely alike under the steel helmets or the bills of dress caps. If their names may not be household words in the twenty-first century, they hold a respected place in that body of "good ordinary generals" on whose competence all armies depend no less than on the skill and wills of their ordinary soldiers.

These generals were a cohort in the most basic sense. They held the same rank: major general. The usual congressional concern for keeping budgets and egos down meant that, unlike most other armies, corps and division commanders were differentiated by appointment but not by rank. Yet paradoxically, those who held the higher post were the invisible men of the general officer corps.

The division was the army's building block. Generals are usually identified with the divisions they commanded: Terry Allen with the 1st and 104th; P. Wood with the 4th Armored; and so on. The army commanders are familiar for the most part because there were fewer of them. Corps were anonymous. Their identities were amorphous. They had no permanent structure; divisions and supporting units shifted from one to another, often with bewildering speed. Even their designation by roman numerals made it just that much more difficult to tell them apart amid the Is and the Xs.

Yet the corps was the fundamental unit of operational command in the European Theater of Operations. It was to the corps that Patton, Hodges, and their counterparts turned to run the battles that army headquarters planned. The corps was like an O-ring: easy to overlook but a vital ele-

ment in the system's functioning. With no administrative responsibilities, its headquarters provided tactical direction to the flexible combinations of forces required by the modern mobile battlefield. Its command was a corresponding test of a general officer's ability, his professionalism, and not least his character.

Winton features six of the U.S. Army's best: Leonard Gerow, J. Lawton Collins, John Millikin, Matthew Ridgway, Troy Middleton, and Manton Eddy. He takes them through their prewar careers and their respective experiences in the army's educational system and then sends them into action in a critical situation: the Battle of the Bulge. His decision to focus on an operation involving an initial series of defeats is unusual—and correspondingly praiseworthy. Adversity spotlights character and ability—or their absence—more clearly and unforgivingly than victory.

Winton has been engaged in this project for years and shows an easy mastery of a broad spectrum of sources. While maintaining focus on the corps that directed the ground battle, he presents their actions in context by segueing his presentation easily from frontline battalion to army group levels. He systematically integrates the role of airpower in U.S. ground operations. He presents the German perspective of events, offering a consistent, solid analysis of command problems and command decisions on “the other side of the hill.”

Winton avoids in exemplary fashion the editorializing and second-guessing that mars so much operational history. He allows his subjects' achievements—and mistakes—to tell their own stories. The result is a seminal presentation of the processes of developing senior officers from a near-vestigial professional army to command a national conscript force. It is also a model account of the Battle of the Bulge. Winton does a particularly outstanding job of challenging the still-familiar canard that the U.S. Army won its war by unsophisticated use of overwhelming materiel superiority. The German offensive was a desperate undertaking. But the Wehrmacht had five years of practice at beating long odds. In the Bulge it gave its remaining best at all levels. Victory—and victory at relatively low cost—reflected “brute force” less than it did the operational fine-tuning provided by six men: the American corps commanders.

The U.S. Army had no “right” backgrounds like Britain's Brigade of Guards or Germany's General Staff to ease the path of promising juniors. Personal qualities were correspondingly important. Carefully avoiding the temptations of psychohistory on one hand and prosopography on the other, Winton describes a half dozen different but harmonious blends of intelli-

gence, character, and energy—the kinds that may not predict, but certainly prefigure, success in command. Connections, serendipity, a certain randomness, also helped bring these particular generals to the Ardennes in the winter of 1944. But what ultimately made them the right men at the right time was their common experience of an advanced formal, institutional education for command that combined with their individual talents and potentials in a distinctively American fashion. Winton's generals built individually upon a system that, whatever its shortcomings, provided a solid matrix for developing professional ability. Like the army in which they served, the corps commanders in the Battle of the Bulge were not found wanting when tested against the best across the battle line.

Dennis Showalter



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PREFACE

The seeds for this study were sown on a cold winter day in 1985 on a small bus winding its way through the Ardennes during a battlefield tour being conducted by the U.S. Army's School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS). The instructors were one of my faculty colleagues, Douglas V. Johnson II, and one of my students, Gregory M. Fontenot. Both were eminently qualified. Doug had taught the advanced sections of the History of the Military Art course at West Point, and Greg had produced a superb master's thesis on the 7th Armored Division in the Ardennes campaign. Greg opened his lecture on the bus with the observation that this was the largest single action fought by the U.S. Army during World War II. That statement immediately piqued my interest, simply because I had never thought of the battle in terms of its scale, but in terms of its causes, its conduct, and its consequences. But of course, I thought to myself, it *was* the largest American battle of the war. Normandy was arguably more important, because if the Allies had not gotten ashore, there simply would not have been a campaign in Northwest Europe. But the Bulge was demonstrably a larger affair, both in terms of the forces employed and in terms of the geographic area covered. It also had more than its fair share of high command drama and gripping stories of small bands of lonely soldiers fighting against terrible odds in conditions that Eric Larrabee tellingly characterizes as "indescribable repulsiveness and stress."¹ As I walked the ground that year and listened to what Doug and Greg had to say, I realized what a multifaceted undertaking this had been and how much could be learned from studying it closely. In short, I became "hooked" on the Bulge.

My fascination with the Ardennes campaign was abetted by the fact that in the following summer Doug and Greg both moved on, leaving me with responsibility for the enterprise. Over the next four years, I had the opportunity to return annually to the Ardennes to help the SAMS students develop some of the many insights one can take away from studying this epic struggle in almost every area of military art and science: leadership at all levels; the importance of small unit cohesion; the reciprocal relationships among tactics, operational art, and strategy; the influence of terrain on land combat and of weather on both land and air combat; the interplay among intelligence, operations, and logistics; the centrality of combined arms to effective tactical forms; and the interplay of moral, mental, and material fac-

tors in war. In the final stage of this experience, my colleague, then at Fort Leavenworth and now at Air University, Daniel J. Hughes, teamed up with me to convert it from a battlefield tour, in which the students have a rather passive role, into a staff ride, in which the students are active participants. I was also privileged to assist in the conduct of a command staff ride led by General Montgomery Meigs, USA, then commanding U.S. Army forces in Europe, and attended by Congressman Ike Skelton (D-Mo.), a true champion of the study of history in the armed services. And so, over the years, I came to be acquainted with many of the major aspects of this remarkable campaign.

As my appreciation for the Bulge developed, my awareness became more acute of two realities. First, it was, as Greg's opening comment had noted, immense. Nearly 30 American divisions and a like number of German divisions took part, including on both sides more than a million men, 2,300 tanks, and roughly 5,900 pieces of artillery. Additionally, the Americans were supported by some 4,000 Allied aircraft; and the German air effort, while not nearly as large, saw the last gasp of the Luftwaffe that launched a thousand planes on New Year's Day. Second, the literature of the campaign is equally vast. There is a veritable cornucopia of works published on the Bulge, ranging from the accounts of individual soldiers and small unit actions, to analyses of the strains that the campaign placed on the Anglo-American coalition, to other works that attempt to cover the entire campaign, so to speak, from the foxhole to Versailles. As I surveyed this literature, however, it appeared to me that two things were missing. First, I found it difficult to determine in any depth what role had been played by the American corps commanders who participated in the battle. Second, although I could find a great deal of material on the ground battle and some material on aerial combat, there was almost nothing that attempted to establish connections between the two. This latter concern became more personally pressing in 1990 when I took up my current position at the U.S. Air Force's School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (SAASS) and began to view my historical and theoretical studies in a more three-dimensional framework than I had previously. I thus determined it would be useful to examine the contributions to the campaign made by the six American corps commanders and to ensure that the portrayal of the larger contextual factors paid some attention to the air operations that helped influence and shape it.

One personal disclaimer is required. My father, Walter F. Winton, Jr., to whom this work is dedicated, fought in the Bulge as the G-2, or intelligence officer, of the 82nd Airborne Division. After V-E Day, he became G-2 of XVIII (Airborne) Corps, commanded by Matthew B. Ridgway. He

subsequently served under Ridgway in four different assignments, perhaps most notably as his aide-de-camp in the Korean War. He was, and still is, a “Ridgway man.” I believe he is so with good reason. Despite this belief, I have attempted to be as objective in my assessment of Ridgway as I have of the other protagonists of this work. It is left to the reader to determine the extent to which this effort has succeeded.

As in any work of this magnitude, many obligations must be acknowledged. Two of my superiors at SAMS, then Colonels Richard Hart Sinnreich and L. D. “Don” Holder, allowed me to return repeatedly to the Ardennes to soak up the battlefield. And two commandants of SAASS, Colonels Philip Meilinger and Thomas Griffith, staunchly supported requests for sabbaticals to get this work into gear and to bring it to completion. My SAASS colleagues graciously absorbed increased teaching and advisory loads during these absences. The Air University Foundation generously supported the acquisition of photographs and the production of maps.

Archivists, librarians, and other colleagues have been of inestimable assistance. Foremost is Dr. Timothy Nenninger, chief of modern military records at the National Archives. Tim has gone far out of his way to track down documents during and between my trips to Washington, D.C., and to College Park, Maryland; he is an important asset to the study of military history in this country and a true friend to those who practice the craft. Robin Crookson, German records specialist at the National Archives, answered many questions and facilitated acquisition of the foreign military studies collection by the Air University Library; and Holly Reed was of great assistance in the still photograph collection. David Keough, senior archivist/historian in the historical reference branch at the U.S. Army Military History Institute (MHI), Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, has offered many kind suggestions and insights to facilitate my work and responded with alacrity to many email queries. Dr. Richard Sommers, head of the patron services branch in MHI’s recently dedicated Ridgway Hall, graciously and efficiently eased my labors in the institute’s still photo collection. John Slonaker, head of the historical reference branch at MHI, guided me through the institute’s comprehensive collection of unit histories. Eric Voelz, archivist at the National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, Missouri, was immensely helpful in locating and providing access to the personnel records of the six protagonists of this study. Bob Lane and Dr. Shirley Lassiter, successive directors of the Air University Library, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, have supported without hesitation the acquisition of materials to support this work. Additional assistance from this fine institution has been provided by Sarah Vickery, chief of the technical services branch; Lynn Lonnegan, acquisitions specialist; Steve

Chun, Ron Fuller, and Joan Phillips, bibliographers; Glenda Armstrong, formerly cartographic specialist; and, especially, Edith Williams, interlibrary loan librarian. Joseph Caver and Dr. James Kitchens were unfailingly helpful and courteous in guiding me through the relevant airpower papers at the U.S. Air Force Historical Research Agency. Elaine McConnell, former archivist in the special collections at the Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, provided cheerful and efficient responses to repeated requests. Diane Jacob at the Virginia Military Institute Archives in Lexington, Virginia, was extremely helpful in guiding me through the Leonard T. Gerow papers. Dr. Larry Bland and Marty Gansz provided excellent assistance at the George C. Marshall Library, also in Lexington. Dr. John P. Millikin of Phoenix, Arizona, General John Millikin's grandson, graciously allowed access to his grandfather's private papers. Z. Frank Hanner, director of the National Infantry Museum at Fort Benning, Georgia, kindly provided extracts of Manton S. Eddy's combat log. Dr. Boyd Dastrup, command historian at the U.S. Army Field Artillery Center, provided useful insights on the organization of corps artillery in World War II. And Dwight Strandberg of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library in Abilene, Kansas, competently guided me through its collections. Michael Briggs, editor-in-chief at the University Press of Kansas, offered encouragement and a number of very helpful suggestions in the final stages of composition. Kelly Rhodes proved a wizard on the scanner and saved me many hours. Dennis Showalter reviewed the manuscript with his indomitable mixture of perspicacity, attention to detail, and verve. Jonathan House offered numerous, specific suggestions that focused the narrative and polished the presentation. Douglas Johnson asked many shrewd questions that sharpened the analysis. Together, these three scholars constituted a "Dream Team" of collegial, professional assistance that any military historian would treasure.

I would also like to thank Lieutenant Colonel Henry G. Phillips, USA, Ret., for sharing early drafts from his biography of Manton S. Eddy and providing keen insights into Eddy's character and professional competence.² Dr. David Hogan of the U.S. Army Center for Military History similarly provided excerpts of an early draft of his study of the First Army headquarters in World War II and has responded with grace and dispatch to a number of follow-on requests.³ Chapter Two, "Toward an American Philosophy of Command," is a revised version of an article of the same title that appeared in the October 2000 *Journal of Military History* and is included here with the kind permission of the editor. The late Colonel John Madigan, USA, provided a very helpful critique of an early draft of that article. Material from the profile of General Ridgway found in Chapter Three originally appeared

in the March-April 2002 *Assembly* under the title “‘The Right Way, the Wrong Way, the Ridgway’: Matthew B. Ridgway as Division Commander.” It is likewise included with the editor’s permission.

My wife, Barbara, who has lived with this project for far too long, provided constant encouragement, prodded when necessary, and graciously assisted in the research. She is the love of my life and enriches all that I do.

These intellectual and emotional debts are indeed significant. However, as one confronts the enormity of the Bulge, one is left with a tremendous feeling of humility in light of the incredible sacrifices made by the soldiers who fought on both sides and the manifest impossibility of ever grasping it all. It was truly an epic in both American and German history. I am thus compelled to close with the observation that, despite the generous assistance of many friends and associates, what follows represents my own work; and the aforementioned are blameless in regard to any errors of fact or infelicities of interpretation discovered by the reader.



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ABBREVIATIONS

AAA	antiaircraft artillery
AAR	After-Action Report
AD	Armored Division
AEAF	Allied Expeditionary Air Force
AEF	American Expeditionary Forces
AFB	Air Force Base
AG	Army Group
AIB	Armored Infantry Battalion
AUL	Air University Library
CAFH	Center for Air Force History
CARL	Combined Arms Research Library
CBO	Combined Bomber Offensive
CCA	Combat Command A
CCB	Combat Command B
CCR	Combat Command Reserve
CG	Commanding General
CGSC	Command and General Staff College
CGSS	Command and General Staff School
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff
CMH	Center of Military History
CO	Commanding Officer
CP	Command Post
DDEL	Dwight D. Eisenhower Library
DSC	Distinguished Service Cross
DSM	Distinguished Service Medal
ETHINT	European Theater Historical Interview
ETO	European Theater of Operations
FA	Field Artillery
FEB	Führer Escort Brigade
FGB	Führer Grenadier Brigade
FMS	Foreign Military Studies
FUSA	First United States Army
G-1	General Staff-1 (personnel and administration)
G-2	General Staff-2 (intelligence)
G-3	General Staff-3 (plans, operations, and training)

G-4	General Staff-4 (logistics)
GCML	George C. Marshall Library
GIR	Glider Infantry Regiment
ID	Infantry Division
I&R	Intelligence and Reconnaissance
IR	Infantry Regiment
KIA	killed in action
LD	Line of Departure
LNO	Liaison Officer
LOI	Letter of Instructions
LSU	Louisiana State University
MHI	Military History Institute
MIA	missing in action
NAII	National Archives II
NCO	Noncommissioned Officer
NDU	National Defense University
NPRC	National Personnel Records Center
OAFH	Office of Air Force History
OB	Oberbefehlshaber (Commander-in-Chief)
OCMH	Office of the Chief of Military History
OKH	Oberkommando des Heeres (High Command of the Army)
OKW	Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (High Command of the Armed Forces)
PGD	Panzer Grenadier Division
PIR	Parachute Infantry Regiment
POW	prisoner of war
Pz	panzer
RAF	Royal Air Force
RCT	Regimental Combat Team
RG	Record Group
SAASS	School of Advanced Air and Space Studies
SAMS	School of Advanced Military Studies
SGS	Secretary of the General Staff
SHAEF	Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces
Sitrep	Situation Report
SRH	Special Report Historical
SS	Schutzstaffeln (protection squads)
TAC	Tactical Air Command
TAF	Tactical Air Force
TD	tank destroyer

Abbreviations

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TF	Task Force
USA	United States Army
USAFHRA	United States Air Force Historical Research Agency
USAWC	United States Army War College
USMA	United States Military Academy
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USSBS	United States Strategic Bombing Survey
USSTAF	United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe
VG	Volksgrenadier
VGD	Volksgrenadier Division
VMI	Virginia Military Institute
VT	variable time
WDCSA	War Department Chief of Staff Army
WIA	wounded in action
WPD	War Plans Division



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1

Introduction

EARLY ON THE AFTERNOON OF 18 DECEMBER 1944, Major General Troy H. Middleton, Commanding General (CG), VIII Corps, while in his command post at Bastogne, Belgium, received a telephone message from Colonel John H. Gilbreth, Commanding Officer (CO), Combat Command Reserve (CCR), 9th Armored Division.¹ The call requested permission either to withdraw or to reinforce Task Force (TF) Rose, a composite infantry-tank-engineer contingent of about 200 men, commanded by Captain Lawrence K. Rose. Rose's men had been defending a critical road junction ten miles northeast of Bastogne for over five hours and were being pressed on three sides by the lead regiment of the 2nd Panzer Division. We do not know precisely what Middleton was thinking as he considered this request, but we can reconstruct the major considerations that influenced him. Over the previous two days, the German XLVII Panzer Corps had blown a hole ten miles wide in the middle of the VIII Corps sector. Two other German corps had made similar, though not as dramatic, advances farther to the north; and still another two were pressing steadily in the south. German tanks were now west of the Clerf River, the last natural obstacle between VIII Corps' original front lines and Bastogne. If the Germans captured Bastogne, they would control a major road hub enabling them to sustain their offensive at least to the Meuse River, and perhaps beyond. The outlook was bleak, but help was on the way. A combat command of the 10th Armored Division was en route to Bastogne and projected to arrive that evening. Furthermore, the 101st Airborne Division was departing from Rheims, France, on its way by truck to Bastogne. Middleton did not know for certain when the Screaming Eagles would arrive, but with luck it would be sometime on the next day. The human calculus was fairly clear. If Middleton refused Colonel Gilbreth's request for either withdrawal or reinforcement, most of Captain Rose's soldiers would die or spend the rest of the war in German stalags. If he granted the withdrawal request, they could live to fight another day. But the tactical calculus was much more ambiguous. Would reinforcing TF Rose jeopardize the defense of other positions east of Bastogne? How much time could be gained by continuing to defend the road junction, versus falling back to the next position? How much time did he have to have? Could

the 101st Airborne and an armored combat command actually defend Bastogne? If so, for how long and under what circumstances? How important was Bastogne anyway? How many lives was it worth? The immediate fate of TF Rose represented just one of the many decisions Middleton would have to make in the campaign that came to be known as the Battle of the Bulge, and he was just one of the six American corps commanders who fought in that campaign.²

This book is about those six men, the decisions they made, the actions they took, and the education and experiences that prepared them to become senior commanders. These commanders, listed in the sequence their formations became engaged in the battle, were Major General Leonard T. Gerow, CG, V Corps; Troy H. Middleton, CG, VIII Corps; Matthew B. Ridgway, CG, XVIII (Airborne) Corps; John Millikin, CG, III Corps; Manton S. Eddy, CG, XII Corps; and J. Lawton Collins, CG, VII Corps.³ The book asks four major questions. What were these officers taught about command? How did they grow professionally from their precommissioning studies to the eve of the Bulge? What effect did they and their corps have on the campaign itself? And, how well did their actions and orders live up to what they had been taught?

Additionally, it investigates the contribution to the campaign of the U.S. Army command structure, in which the corps played a particular role. Organized as an intermediate tactical echelon of command subordinate to the field army and largely devoid of administrative and logistical responsibilities, the corps provided sustained tactical direction to a flexible grouping of subordinate divisions, field artillery groups, engineers, and other combat support assets whose number and composition varied with the fluctuating requirements of a dynamic battlefield. The question here is the extent to which this command structure itself influenced the conduct of the Ardennes campaign.

Finally, the book seeks to determine the ways in which airpower, particularly Allied airpower, influenced the conduct of the campaign. Here, several issues must be clarified. First, the corps was not directly involved in the planning of air operations. This function was principally executed one level above the corps, where each field army had associated with it a tactical air command whose primary mission was to provide it both close air support and relatively shallow air interdiction.⁴ Thus, the primary nexus of air-ground cooperation was at the field army-tactical air command interface. There was also liaison one level higher between numbered air forces and army groups. During the Ardennes campaign, these connections were between the American Ninth Air Force and 12th Army Group and between the British 2nd Tactical Air Force and 21st Army Group. And finally, the theater headquarters,

Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF), was, under certain circumstances, able to draw upon the resources of the United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe (USSTAF) and the British Bomber Command. The Ardennes campaign represents one of these circumstances. Despite the lack of direct corps involvement in air-ground operations, this issue is being addressed for two reasons. The first is historical: to determine the extent to which the corps battles were influenced by air support. The second is historiographic: despite the abundance of literature on ground operations in the Bulge and a significantly less robust body of literature on its air operations, little has been done to make concrete connections between the two.⁵

Why should there be another study of the Bulge? The primary reason is that there simply does not exist a detailed study of the six American corps commanders who participated actively in the campaign. But to answer the question fully, we must briefly survey the relevant literature. Leaving aside the air studies and the almost-too-numerous-to-count photographic essays interlarded with text, works on the Bulge can be divided into three major categories.

The first group consists of accounts that focus on small-unit actions. They include, among others, Gerald Astor's *A Blood-Dimmed Tide*, Roscoe C. Blunt's *Inside the Battle of the Bulge*, William C. C. Cavanagh's *Krinkelt-Rocherath*, Janice Holt Giles's *The Damned Engineers*, S. L. A. Marshall's *Bastogne*, George W. Neill's *Infantry Soldier*, Robert H. Phillips's *To Save Bastogne*, Michael Reynolds's *The Devil's Adjutant*, and Stephen M. Rusiecki's *The Key to the Bulge*.⁶ These are important works. They remind us of the eternal verity that after the strategists decide upon their grand designs and after their intermediate subordinates divine how best to execute these schemes, the tough, messy job of winning wars depends upon the willingness and ability of lonely individuals to put their lives on the line when all their physical senses tell them the risk is not worth the gain.

The second assortment of works about the Ardennes campaign places it in the context of coalition tension engendered by the conflicting strategic concepts and personalities of Dwight Eisenhower and Bernard Montgomery, with Omar Bradley and George Patton as deeply interested and strongly opinionated participants. This literature includes books such as David Irving's *The War between the Generals*; the memoirs of the protagonists; and such biographical studies as David Eisenhower's *Eisenhower at War*, Nigel Hamilton's *Monty: Final Years of the Field Marshal, 1944-1976*, Carlo D'Este's *Patton*, and that strange hybrid, Omar Bradley and Clay Blair's *A Soldier's Life*.⁷ These books are important as they relate to the Bulge. The political center of gravity of Hitler's plan for the Ardennes offensive was fracturing Anglo-American unity. Furthermore, one of the most important

decisions, and certainly the most controversial, made by Dwight Eisenhower during the campaign was to place Bernard Montgomery in command of the American First and Ninth Armies, an action whose eminent operational sense was overshadowed by the fact that it both encouraged Montgomery's already well-developed feelings of egocentrism and wounded Omar Bradley's sense of professional pride to the very quick.

The final category of works dealing with the Bulge includes those that attempt to assess the campaign comprehensively. These include, among many others, Hugh Cole, *The Ardennes*; Trevor N. Dupuy, David L. Bongard, and Charles C. Anderson, Jr., *Hitler's Last Gamble*; John S. D. Eisenhower, *The Bitter Woods*; George Forty, *The Reich's Last Gamble*; Charles B. MacDonald, *A Time for Trumpets*; Robert E. Merriam, *Dark December*; and John Toland, *Battle*.⁸ Each book displays the particular qualifications of its author, ranging from Cole, whose thorough scholarship and balanced objectivity set a high standard for the writing of official history; to MacDonald, who won a Silver Star as an infantry company commander in the Bulge and later served with the army history office; to Eisenhower, whose family lineage granted him unique access to the principals and whose ability to carry a sustained narrative marked him as a most capable historian; to Dupuy, whose consulting firm created a mammoth database drawn from the Ardennes campaign for use in validating Cold War computer simulations. Each is valuable in its own right. However, they all share a common tendency—they split the story into two halves: the sharp end of the spear and the deliberations at the top. Thus, although the corps commanders are not completely neglected, they tend to get short shrift and little detailed attention.

There are, however, two works deserving of special mention. One is specifically focused on the Ardennes; the other is not. J. D. Morelock's *Generals of the Ardennes* defies categorization.⁹ Morelock's method was to examine one American commander at every level from theater to combat command (in armored units, the latter was one level below the division). The choices at the first two levels were givens: Eisenhower at theater and Bradley at army group. At field army, there appeared to be two obvious choices: Courtney Hodges at First Army and George Patton at Third Army. Instead, Morelock focused on William Simpson at Ninth Army, based on the rationale that Simpson's unselfish provision of units to First Army contributed positively to the campaign. At the corps level, Morelock's subject is Middleton. This was eminently appropriate, for Middleton's VIII Corps had by far the largest frontage of any unit in the opening phase of the campaign. However, Morelock's analysis of Middleton covers only the period up to 26 December 1944, leaving out the VIII Corps commander's contributions during the remainder

of the campaign. The second work that is somewhat outside the above categories is Russell Weigley's *Eisenhower's Lieutenants*.¹⁰ Based on extensive primary source research and flowing from Weigley's broad understanding of the institutional development of the American army, this is an important and extremely useful work. And, although the Ardennes is not Weigley's sole focus, he devotes well over a hundred pages to the campaign. Weigley's judgments on individual personalities are shrewd and broadly informed. However, like the more comprehensive accounts of the Ardennes mentioned above, his analysis tends to be split between the gripping and tightly written narratives of regimental and divisional actions and the deliberations at field army, army group, and theater headquarters. Although attention to the corps level is not absent, neither is it prominent.

Why has the literature on the Bulge in particular, and World War II in general, tended to neglect the corps level of command? The most obvious reason is that corps, being flexible groupings of combat units, have no dedicated constituency. The army veterans' organizations that sprang up after World War II tend to center around either the regiment or the division. These organizations maintain membership rosters, produce newsletters, conduct reunions, and generally foster a sense of brotherhood and comradeship. There are no such organizations for corps. Why is this so? One insight into this phenomenon comes from Michael Howard's recollections of the various echelons of higher command seen from the eyes of a subaltern: "As a very young platoon commander in Italy, I knew my brigade commander. . . . I knew the name of my divisional commander, though I never clapped eyes on him. I never knew at any given moment even the name of my corps commander; and I knew about the Army commander only through the press."¹¹ A similar explanation came from a Charlottesville, Virginia, newspaper editor, turned World War II infantry officer, who opined similarly:

The 29th Division did battle directly for Saint-Lô as part of XIX Corps—a point incidental to this account, for a corps headquarters was to me a vague upper sphere with which I had no contact. Often, I was forgetful of which corps was directing our devoted efforts. I am sure that to a corps staff the 2d Battalion [116th Infantry Regiment] was little more than one of the many colored pins on its operations maps. . . . In brief, XIX Corps and I were unmindful of each other as personalities.¹²

But such sentiments were not confined to junior officers. When asked what he thought was the best level of command, John W. Leonard, who com-

manded the 9th Armored Division from the Bulge to V-E Day and both V Corps and XVIII (Airborne) Corps after the war, replied, “A division, the largest unit that has a soul!”¹³ Thus, the corps’ constantly shifting organization made it difficult, if not impossible, for anyone except those who served on a corps staff for a protracted period to forge with it any sort of emotional bond.

A more speculative explanation is that there seems to be a human fascination with military history written at two levels: the very top and the very bottom. At the upper reaches, we are enthralled by the notion of great men making decisions that affect the destinies of millions, or at least hundreds of thousands. At the lower reaches of combat, we are likewise gripped by the human drama of individuals and small groups facing the lonely realities of deprivation and the always-present possibility of traumatic injury, or even death. This human tendency toward divergence of perspective has wider manifestations as well. World War II television programming on The History Channel, for example, frequently features *Battleline*, a documentary focusing on the experience of two individuals on opposite sides of a significant battle. It also airs frequent studies of the generalship of men such as Eisenhower, Montgomery, and Patton, as well as Douglas MacArthur and Erwin Rommel. Coverage of the Gulf War reflected the same trend: detailed analyses of weapons systems and crew training complemented by excerpts of General Norman Schwarzkopf’s famous “Hail Mary Play” briefing. Why does this programming tend to divide itself between the very top and the very bottom? One would have to conclude that it is because the responsible television executives know this is what the viewing public wants to watch. This bifurcated tendency is also reflected in the immensely popular works of Stephen Ambrose. It is implicitly evident in all his works, but it is explicit in his coverage of the Bulge. Commenting critically on Montgomery’s claim to have “taken command” of the battle on the northern shoulder, Ambrose argues:

No one did. Once Eisenhower set the broad objectives—to hold firm along Elsenborn Ridge, to stop the Germans short of the Meuse, and to prepare a coordinated counterattack against the shoulders of the Bulge—this was not a general’s battle. At Bastogne, at Elsenborn, at St.-Vith, at Trois-Ponts, it was a battalion commanders’ battle, or the company commanders’, or the squad leaders’.¹⁴

In other words, what happened at theater level was important; what happened from battalion level down was important; what happened in between was not.

Although such a division of focus is entirely understandable, it leaves significant gaps in our knowledge and understanding of military art and science. Unless we are able to appreciate the specific challenges that arise at what might be called the “middle management” of combat and the human attributes required to meet these challenges, our appreciation of what war really is will remain dangerously imperfect. And while the general population can afford to neglect these middle levels, those who have either a serious desire or a professional obligation to understand warfare as a whole simply cannot. This book is written with such readers in mind. For when one probes beneath the surface, one finds that the corps was not only an important echelon of military organization but also that its commanders required distinct capabilities and labored under several intrinsic constraints.

The basic function of the corps was to act as a flexible command module, to which the army commander could attach a variable number of maneuver divisions, artillery groups, and other combat support assets with which to fight an extended portion of a major operation in accordance with the shifting requirements of a dynamic battlefield.¹⁵ The 1942 *Field Service Regulations* expressed its functions as follows:

The corps is primarily a tactical unit of execution and maneuver. It consists of a headquarters, certain organic elements designated as corps troops, and a variable number of divisions allocated in accordance with the requirements of the situation. The composition of the corps will depend upon its mission, the terrain, and the situation. The flexibility of its organization permits an increase or decrease in the size of the corps, or a change in the type of divisions and other nonorganic elements constituting the corps by the attachment or detachment of divisions and reinforcing units at any time during the operations.¹⁶

In practical terms, corps were usually assigned from two to five divisions. These guidelines were not, however, inviolable. During Operation Cobra in July 1944, Collins had six divisions under his command. At the other end of the scale, a corps headquarters could be pulled out of the line entirely and assigned no divisions at all while it planned for a future action. The corps artillery headquarters was similarly flexible. Like the corps, it was a command shell to which a variable number of artillery groups, normally consisting of medium and heavy artillery, could be allocated from field army headquarters, again dependent upon changing battlefield dynamics. Engineer groupings were similarly flexible.

The responsibilities of corps command were naturally more comprehensive than those of a division commander. A division commander would nor-

mally direct the activities of 12,000 to 15,000 soldiers, but the corps commander could be responsible for 50,000 to 80,000, depending on the particular configuration of his organization. The corps commander also had to be a tactician on a larger scale. And he had to judge the relative capabilities of various types of divisions as well as the diverse human capabilities of the division commanders. The fluidity of the battlefield and the extended lead times required to move divisions into place meant that he had to anticipate emerging tactical requirements earlier than did his subordinates in order to create conditions for their success. In discussing his own elevation from command of the 82nd Airborne Division to that of the XVIII (Airborne) Corps, Matthew Ridgway described the mental and human dimensions of corps command as follows:

The corps commander is almost exclusively concerned with battle tactics. He is responsible for a large sector of the battle area, and all he must worry about in that zone is fighting. He must be a man of great flexibility of mind, for he may be fighting six divisions one day and one division the next as his higher commanders transfer divisions to and from his corps. He must be a man of tremendous physical stamina, too, . . . anticipating where the hardest fighting is to come, and being there in person, ready to help his division commanders in any way he can.¹⁷

It was an apt description, but there was even more to it than Ridgway implied. Because of the army's rank structure in World War II, corps commanders were major generals, the same grade as the division commanders subordinate to them. Thus, their formal authority stemmed solely from their position, with no corresponding grade differential to give added force to their orders. This fact, combined with the reality that the composition of the corps was constantly shifting, created an interesting human dynamic in which division commanders could play on their relations with the army commander, at times to the corps commander's detriment. All this placed a particular premium on the ability of the corps commander to use the force of his personality and intellect to ensure his orders were wholeheartedly accepted and enthusiastically carried out and thus makes the examination of corps command of more than passing interest.

This book begins with a re-creation of what was taught about the nature of command at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff School (CGSS), which was attended by all six of the prospective corps commanders, and at the U.S. Army War College, which was attended by all but Manton Eddy. In addition to giving us insight into the interwar army's expectations of

those it entrusted with the sacred responsibility of command, this analysis also provides a defensible basis for evaluating the performances of the six protagonists.¹⁸ The next step is to examine the development of the six men as military professionals, tracing their careers from their precommissioning studies to the eve of the Bulge. The ultimate purpose of these minibiographical sketches is to answer the question, “Knowing what we know so far, what would we anticipate about this individual’s performance in the forthcoming battle?” A transition is then necessary to summarize the events on both sides leading up to the Bulge, including a brief assessment of why the Americans were so stunningly surprised by the German offensive. This sets the stage for the guts of the book—analysis of the six American corps commanders in the Battle of the Bulge. Their actions are studied in three phases: the period of German initiative, 16–21 December 1944; the period of contested initiative, 22 December 1944–4 January 1945; and the period of American initiative, 5–31 January 1945.¹⁹ Each of these segments opens with an overview of the strategic and operational situation, to include the influence of airpower on the campaign, followed by a detailed examination of each corps battle. We end by briefly tracing the post-Bulge careers of the six commanders and answering the questions outlined above.

The evidence comes from multiple sources. The philosophy of command study is based on curriculum records of the CGSS and the Army War College, supplemented by secondary studies of army education in the interwar period. The six pre-Bulge cameos are sketched from the official personnel records of each officer, located at the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC), St. Louis, Missouri; their academic records at the aforementioned educational institutions; George C. Marshall’s and Dwight D. Eisenhower’s papers; and, where available, biographies, memoirs, and personal papers of the protagonists themselves. The last category is rather uneven. Collins and Ridgway both published their memoirs and left extensive collections of papers at the Eisenhower Library and the U.S. Army Military History Institute (MHI), respectively.²⁰ Additionally, Clay Blair has written an extended treatment of the American airborne units in World War II that illuminates Ridgway’s role in their training and combat employment.²¹ After stepping down from the presidency of Louisiana State University, Middleton cooperated actively in the development of a biography.²² Eddy left a copy of his combat activities log at the National Infantry Museum, and a biography was published in 2000.²³ There is no biography of Gerow, but he did leave a small collection of papers at the Virginia Military Institute. Millikin is the most obscure of the six. Except for cryptic references in the register of West Point graduates, an extremely brief obituary in the *Washington Post*,

and a one-paragraph entry in a standard biographical reference, there is virtually no published material about him.²⁴ This void was partially offset by his grandson kindly granting access to a small collection of papers and photographs that are retained by the family. But for the crux of the study, the investigation of the campaign itself, this unevenness is overcome by reference to official records. Such records, available at the National Archives, include unit journals and message files, daily situation and intelligence reports, monthly after-action reports, unit histories, and many other relevant documents. This trove of evidence is extremely rich and constitutes the fundamental basis upon which assessments of the six commanders' battlefield performances are based. For the German side of the campaign, the most widely used sources are the interviews and reports prepared by senior German officers after the war, collectively known as the Foreign Military Studies (FMS) series. This series is available at the National Archives; and a microfiche version of the collection is also on hand at the Air University Library, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. Additional material, particularly on the German side of the campaign, comes from a collection of detailed studies prepared by the U.S. Army Office of the Chief of Military History (OCMH) staff, now available at the National Archives. In sum, despite the unevenness of biographical information concerning the six protagonists, the primary and secondary sources for the study as a whole are clearly adequate and in some cases extremely robust.

Now let us discover what the rising generation of U.S. Army officers in the aftermath of World War I was taught about the nature of command.



PROLOGUE



